



Washington Progress Report

ASSASSINATION INFORMATION BUREAU

63 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139 (617) 661-8411 February/March 1977

On March 16, the House Select Committee on Assassinations put a series of questions, under oath, to powerful Tampa crime boss Santo Trafficante. The mobster refused to answer any questions, citing the 1st, 5th, and 14th Amendments. He was asked: if he had any connections with the CIA or other Federal agencies, if he had relationships with Johnny Rosseli, Sam Giancana, and Robert Maheu (all participants in efforts to murder Fidel Castro), if he had advance knowledge of the Kennedy assassination, and if he knew Jack Ruby.

In addition, Trafficante was asked about the circumstances of his release from a prison in Castro's Cuba, and if he had any knowledge of CIA/Mafia assassination plots, Alpha 66, the International Anti-Communist Brigade, the No Name Key Group, and the Cuban Revolutionary Council, all of which were militant anti-Castro, anti-communist groups, the last being organized by Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt.

Also subpoenaed by the HSCA were all of Trafficante's records and papers relating to these matters from Jan. 1958 to Dec. 1964.

Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), Committee chairperson, stated that a contempt of Congress citation will not be issued against the alleged drug trafficker for the time being, and no immunity will be issued to any witness under any circumstances.

Interestingly, this is the first time Trafficante has appeared before a Congressional probe into the CIA, assassinations, or Castro. The Church Committee claimed they couldn't find him!

Subpoenaed for upcoming hearings were: Capt. Jack LeGrand of the Birmingham Police, Hugh Stanton and Gene Baxdale, the D.A. and Sheriff of Shelby County, Tenn., and Winslow Chapman, Director of the Memphis Police. The Committee hopes these witnesses will shed light on the King assassination.

That Trafficante pled the Amendments that he did to these questions because he has something to hide is hardly a radical or unsound hypothesis. Skeptics of the investigation and/or the Committee will have to take note. His non-testimony has dramatized the need for an investigation, and can only improve the standing of the Committee in the eyes of its patrons, the House of Representatives.

Richard Sprague, chief counsel and director of the Select Committee on Assassinations, may still lose his job. Although Sprague has just won a battle with former Committee Chairperson Henry Gonzalez (D-Texas), he may eventually lose the war. The ferocity and substance of Gonzalez' charges against Sprague seemed unwarranted, and prompted Committee members to unanimously support Sprague, forcing Sprague's resignation. Congressional bosses, laboring under the antiquated seniority system, hate to see one of their own so ignominiously rejected in favor of someone outside of the Congressional club. Therefore, rumors have it that Sprague may have to go if the Committee's life is to be extended.



There has existed a long standing feud between the offices of Henry Gonzalez and former Committee Chairperson, Thomas Downing. During the year and a half that the two Congressmen sought to push their respective resolutions to establish assassination investigations, numerous efforts were made to join the bills together into one joint resolution. These efforts failed, and when the Black Caucus finally persuaded former Speaker Carl Albert to sponsor a resolution establishing the present committee, Gonzalez and his staff felt slighted at the naming of Downing as Chairperson. They argued that Gonzalez, not Downing, was the original sponsor and mover on the issue.

For an eight-term representative, Gonzalez has amassed relatively little power on Capitol Hill. His willingness to accommodate the chummy atmosphere of the old guard network lead him to assume the assassination probe was to be his baby. He blew it.

Gonzalez' attacks on Sprague stemmed from his demand that Sprague fire a number of Downing staff members who had been hired by the Committee. Sprague's reluctance to do so was interpreted by Gonzalez and his people to mean that Sprague was rebelling against Gonzalez' leadership. The litany of charges against Sprague that followed were trumped up, nit-picking charges used by Gonzalez to justify the firing of Sprague.

Lastly, we have been asked about Gonzalez' charge that the Committee is a "put-up job" and that "vast and powerful forces, including the country's most sophisticated crime elements" are behind the opposition to this investigation. The irony of such a statement coming from Gonzalez is hard to ignore. While we would agree that such forces are fighting the probe, the foolhardy actions of Rep. Gonzalez only served to further the objectives of those opposed to the Committee.

In recent weeks, there have been several downplayed news stories about a letter that was allegedly written by Lee Harvey Oswald on Nov. 8, 1963 to H.L. Hunt, the late and conservative Texas oil billionaire. The AIB has a copy of this letter. It reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Hunt,

I would like information concerning my position. I am asking only for information. I am suggesting that we discuss the matter fully before any steps are taken by me or anyone else.

Thank you,
Lee Harvey Oswald

On February 28, the AIB obtained the opinion of a local handwriting expert, Mrs. Elizabeth McCarthy of Boston. Mrs. McCarthy was referred to us by the Boston Police Dept. and is well respected and often employed by law enforcement officers and attorneys throughout New England. We have learned that she has some familiarity with the JFK assassination evidence, having personally examined original samples of Oswald's handwriting in the National Archives and having appeared as a prosecution witness for Jim Garrison in New Orleans. She testified that "Clem Bertrand's" signature came from the hand of Clay Shaw. It was Mrs. McCarthy's opinion that the handwriting in the letter was that of Lee Harvey Oswald.

The letter originally surfaced in the summer of 1975 when



an anonymous source in Mexico mailed copies of the letter to several Warren Commission critics, including Penn Jones, Harold Weisberg, and Paul Hoch. The story first appeared in the media in a 2/6/77 Dallas Morning News story by Earl Golz.

The unidentified source said that he had given the letter to FBI Director Clarence Kelley in late 1974, but having heard nothing from Kelley, he sent copies to independent investigators. Penn Jones received a cover letter typed in Spanish and replied to the return address in Mexico. No further word was received from the anonymous source.

The FBI maintains that it has no record of the letter in their possession by 1974, and that they first acquired a copy in early February of this year from a former aide to H.L. Hunt, to whom the letter had been passed by Penn Jones and Earl Golz. Aides to the late billionaire have reportedly denied that Hunt ever received such a letter from Oswald, and our contacts in Dallas say there is indeed some doubt as to exactly which Mr. Hunt Oswald wrote to.

The Select Committee subpoenaed all the physical evidence in the King case from Memphis officials. The following items may prove to be of special interest: cigarette butts taken from the alleged getaway white Mustang- Ray did not smoke; the Remington rifle untouched since the day of the killing may now be tested ballistically compared to the slug that killed King; fingerprints from the Rebel Motel, where Ray spent the night prior to the murder and where Ray claims the mysterious Raoul met him. Analyses independent of the FBI will be performed on these exhibits.

Current reports have Sprague and an asst. counsel journeying to Bushy Mountain Prison to take a deposition from James Earl Ray.

Look for a truly ground-breaking feature story on the King assassination by AIB member Jeff Cohen in the April 1st issue of New Times Magazine

This is the second of our Washington Progress Reports. For those of you who would like further issues, please send stamped self-addressed envelopes or contributions to the AIB if you haven't already done so to help defray our expenses. If everyone chips in, we can publish reports with a much needed regularity, and expand their formats to include more news, interviews, and original research pieces. The AIB is firmly committed to a public interest, publically supported news alternative to the national media.

